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AUTHOR Christianson, Linda
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ABSTRACT

The Head Start Male Role Model Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential Program is based on the assumptions that men are valued as nurturers of small children; that low-income Black and Hispanic males can be successful as educators and role models to young children and other men; and that early childhood education can be a remunerative and satisfying career choice for men. The 1-year program consists of 9 quarter hours of study in child development coordinated through National-Louis University and work as a paid teacher aide for 20 hours per week in a Head Start Program. Of the first group of 10 participants, only two completed the program as structured. Problems included the students' failure to keep many agreements (being late or absent from class and work at Head Start sites, and not doing homework and necessary paperwork); students' below-average written language and math skills; and students' sense of being relegated to low-skill tasks. In addition, the community did not support the idea of men working with small children. To improve the program, which also had administrative problems, it was recommended that the coordinator-student relationship be strengthened, and the curriculum be revised to include orientation; outreach; activities focusing on the self-esteem, self-awareness, and commitment of the participants; and success-building in the classroom. (AC)

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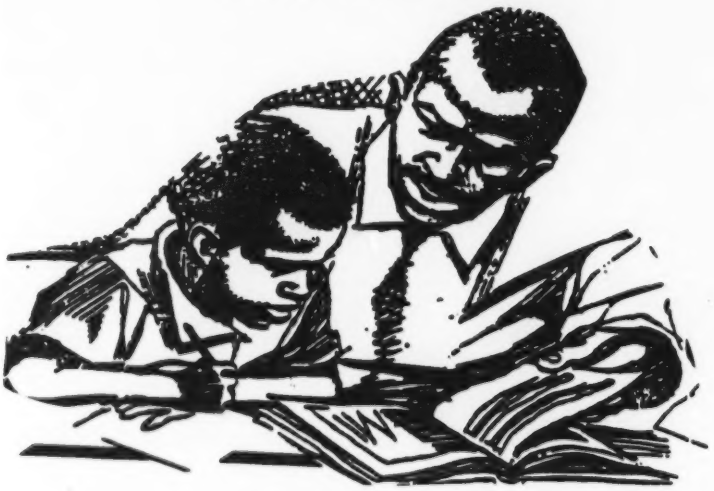
ED 374 901

# HEAD START MALE ROLE MODEL CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE CREDENTIALING CURRICULUM PROJECT



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## INTRODUCTION

This proposal is a suggested guide for helping adult males in the Head Start Male Role Model Child Development Associate Credentialing Program.

### Philosophy Statement

This proposal is premised upon these important philosophical concepts:

1. Men are valued as nurturers of small children.

2. Low income black/Hispanic males can be successful as educators and role models to young children.

3. Men can be accepted by the community and by the Head Start Program as critical to the well-being of young children.

4. Men can impact other men as role models.

5. Early childhood education can be a remunerative and satisfying career choice for men.

6. Men can have leadership positions in the community as advocates for young children and for other men in early childhood education.

### Background

The community has begun to recognize the need for adult males as role models in the lives of young low-income children, and as a response to this, in March of 1993, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation awarded a grant of $50,000 to support the screening, training, and academic course work leading to a CDA (Child Development Associate) credential for two groups of ten young men seeking to become teachers in a large, suburban Cook County Head Start program. The grant was awarded to the Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA) by the foundation, following a grant of $25,000. for a similar purpose awarded in 1991.

## Head Start Male Role Model CDA Credentialing Program

### The Program

The Head Start Male Role Model Child Development Associate Credentialing Program is intended to take one year. It consists of nine quarter hours of study in Child Development, coordinated through National-Louis University at their downtown campus, and working as a paid teacher aide for twenty hours per week in a Head Start program during the year of the course work. Regular course work is supplemented by assistance with basic writing and math skills, as well as computer literacy skills, if needed. On-site supervision is handled by the Head Start teachers and by the Education Coordinators. The program stipulates that the young men host a Father's Day program at the Head Start to which they are assigned. A CDA program evaluator assesses the young men's overall capabilities to receive CDA certification (Appendix A). CEDA has committed to hiring the graduates of this program as full-time Head Start teachers once they complete their CDAs. The men are encouraged to continue their education toward a B.A. degree at National-Louis University.

### The Students

The group of ten men consists of eight African-American males, one Hispanic male and one white male between the ages of 22-35. They all have a high school diploma or a G.E.D. equivalent. They have had 2-3 Community College courses. They live in the western suburbs or the south side of Chicago. Two are married, and one has two children. The men have various backgrounds: one worked as a chef, another as a mental health aide, another on a gambling boat. George Bowen, the father of two children, is an ordained minister and long-time volunteer in CEDA's Head Start program. Most are working at a part-time job to supplement their Head Start teacher's aide position, which pays $5.25/hr. without benefits.

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## THE CURRICULUM PROJECT

The Head Start Male Role Model Child Development Associate Credentialing Program is not achieving all of its stated goals. Of the first group of ten young men to be selected for the program in 1992, only two completed the program as structured. (Both have now been certified as CDAs and are now employed as full-time early childhood educators. Several of the others continue as Head Start volunteers.) The students in the program now are exhibiting signs and symptoms of the inability to complete the program on time. It is the hope of those writing this guide that the program can be saved, for not only the community, but the students, themselves, acknowledge their desire for the program to succeed.

The symptoms identified are the outgrowth of conversations with the men themselves; with National-Louis University counselor and staff; and with CEDA Head Start education coordinators and teachers.

### Symptoms

1. The students do not keep many agreements.

The students are often late or absent from both class and their paid work at the Head Start sites. They often do not do their homework. The students have not turned in necessary paperwork which could allow them to receive credit for their coursework.

2. The students have below-average written language and math skills.

The men were screened in language and math skills upon entering National-Louis University, and it was determined that they would be able to complete course assignments, with some assistance. Currently, students' course work is below average. They do not take advantage of most of the tutoring services offered to them.

3. Some of the students say they feel relegated to low-skill tasks in their work with female Head Start teachers.

The men resent these tasks.

4. The students complain.

The students complain that the program is not serving their needs, that the community does not support them, and that they do not know what is expected of them.

5. The men have family, health, and financially-related issues not directly connected to the program.

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The wife of one man has been diagnosed with cancer; the brother of another was shot and killed in a drive-by shooting. Another is temporarily without an apartment because his mother moved back to Michigan and he can't afford to live alone. Most depend on public transportation to get to class and Head Start site.

Problem Statement

This project identifies problem areas in all four "commonplaces" or areas, and as such, combines this statement with the "situational analysis."

1. Head Start Male Role Model CDA Credentialing Program: The program itself has some troubles. Firstly, the coordinator of this program, who was to integrate the students' coursework with their on-site training, died early on in the program, and has only recently been replaced. As a result, there are gaps in coordination, and the students do not clearly understand what is expected of them, or even how the program operates. At the beginning of their class session they were given the CDA Assessment System and Competency Standards, but no supplementary data or deadlines for achieving goals. This occurred because the new Education Coordinator for the program did not begin until January of 1994. She has met with each individually, but the men continue to be somewhat confused. While National-Louis University has an academic advisor for these students, she is not overseeing the program as a whole, but only the academic component, with a focus on their basic skills and computer learning needs. The academic advisor, Anna Hammond, has met with men personally on a regular basis and feels continuing concerns regarding their academic achievement. The program has not clearly and in writing, informed the students of their rights and responsibilities. Although texts were provided for one class, they were not available for a second class. The students were unclear as to the transferable academic credit they would receive, because this information was not in writing.

2. National-Louis University: The University as a whole is only beginning to focus on the needs of men as early childhood educators. The curriculum and coursework is not targeted to the specific role of men as educators, and much of the curriculum is highly theoretical, rather than practical. Classes are often rescheduled without written notice. The men were not provided with syllabi for their classes. The students cannot even easily purchase books because the bookstore is closed when this group could purchase their books. While tutoring services have been offered, there has not been sufficient effort by the University to have special sessions, or to integrate this tutoring at the times the men are at the school.

3. Community: Unfortunately, the community at large does not support the concept of men working with small children, and as a result, the students receive minimal moral support from family and peers in the community for their endeavors. ( As a corollary to this, the culture does not respect women, or the work they do with small children.) A part of the issue here is pay: men are expected to be breadwinners, and the Head Start teaching job for which they are preparing pays only $12,000 per year.

An additional component of the problem is the resistance by the community to the concept of men as caregivers. (See Attachment I). The fear of child abuse is rampant, and some of that fear permeates the Head Start program: both mothers and women teachers fear allowing too much closeness between male teachers and young children.

4. Students: Because these men are older, they must work at other jobs during this training period in order to support themselves and their families. This condition strains both their time and their commitment to the program. They see little reward financially during their training period, and while they feel supported by the children, they do not experience total support from their Head Start supervisors. They feel they are "guinea pigs" in a trial program which still has many flaws. They feel frustration at the lack of communication among the various parties in the project. Their relatively weak writing and math skills hamper them in their academic work. They are all from low-income backgrounds, and most come out of unstable family environments. The men, for the most part, are unused to commitment, consistency, support, and direction in their lives.

Head Start Male Role Model CDA Credentialing Program

Plans of Action/Alternatives

Multiple directions opened themselves as opportunities for filling the gaps in this program. Offered here are several plans that could be implemented at differing times with flexible budgeting. However, for the immediate problem it is suggested that some segments of each of these alternatives be implemented immediately. Immediate attention should be given to those items which allow the students to commit fully to the program so that they will finish out their year and earn their CDAs. This could take the form of a retreat, so that the students themselves could participate in the development of an orientation plan as well as some skill-building workshops and self-esteem exercises.

Once the alternatives have been fleshed out, they can be turned over to Head Start and National-Louis University personnel for consideration in implementation. An additional possibility is inclusion in The Fatherhood Project, a national effort spearheaded by James Levine at the Families and Work Institute in New York City. He is developing new curricula through contact with fatherhood involvement efforts around the country. Some new local funding possibilities are also being explored.

It is recommended that:

I. The coordinator-student relationship be strengthened, with a clear plan of action for the program.

The new education coordinator should work aggressively with the men to make up for lost time, in order to assist as many men as possible to attain their CDAs. NLU staff and Head Start site directors must meet to agree on additional assistance they men will require. Because there are three components to the program which are not necessarily interrelated, but only relate because of this particular program, it is incumbent that someone oversee the entire program if it is to succeed. Once this is done, it is necessary to establish some long range plans for the program as a whole, as well as to implement strategies for the success of the individuals within the program.

A Head Start Career Ladder must be developed, so incoming men can see clear, identifiable steps they can take to move up within the Head Start program once they are certified.

II. An orientation curriculum be devised.

It is crucial that the men understand all facets of the program. It was very apparent from our meeting with them that they did not understand exactly what was expected of them nor the organizations involved with the program.

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The orientation should be a full day meeting prior to the start of the program. This meeting should take place in a comfortable setting with all meals and snacks provided. Perhaps an overnight outing at the Starved Rock Lodge and Meeting Center near Ottawa, Illinois could be a consideration.

A. Objectives

1. The men will understand the roles of the participating institutions.
2. The men will understand the requirements of the CDA application process.
3. The men will understand the educational goals of the program.
4. The men will understand the available auxiliary services.

B. Activities

1. Guest speaker from CEDA.
2. Guest speaker who is a former member of the program.
3. Guest speaker who can explain auxiliary services.
4. Video tape that describes CDA application and testing process.
5. Role playing exercises that raise the mens' awareness about their purpose in joining the program.
6. The men will begin writing their autobiographies which are required as a part of the CDA application.

III. An outreach curriculum be developed.

This program would educate the community as to the needs for the program, its success, its goals, and its participants, serve as a recruitment aid to attract more young men to enter the field, and enhance, and encourage the male participants' sense of self-esteem.

A. Goals

1. Develop community awareness and recognition.
2. Enhance visibility of male participation in early childhood education.
3. Create a commitment and bond between the men and the program.
4. Give male participants an awareness of the larger context in which their program exists.
5. Develop the self-esteem of the participants.

B. Strategies

1. Develop a speaker's bureau.

The speaker's bureau will be composed of the male participants, who would speak to community groups about the program. As a component of this, the students would create a video which would give a more personal feel to the participants' experiences. This bureau could also speak to funding agencies, as well as at national conferences.

2. Offer a basic PR skill-training seminar.

This seminar would develop the participants' public speaking and public relations skills, both as an encouragement to self-esteem as well as develop a structure for outreach.

3. Establish a men's group to discuss issues surrounding early childhood education.

This group would enhance the awareness of male participation in early childhood education as well as serve as a forum for personal issues the participants in the program might have.

IV. A reflective curriculum be devised.

Dr. George B. Smith, a former Head Start teacher, father of six, and nationally known lecturer on the importance of male involvement in Head Start, spoke with the men in an informal session on Friday, February 25 at CEDA. He spoke from being himself an "endangered black male" to the central concerns these men expressed. It is a complex issue. Their traditional role has been as disciplinarian and bread winner, and many men fear revealing their more vulnerable, nurturing side. But a component concern is the recent rash of sex abusers of children. Some men said mothers explicitly do not want the men to touch their children.

Studies reveal that authoritarian paternal behavior reduces academic competence. In a question and answer session the men asked Dr. Smith how to set appropriate limits for the children and still be open to their needs. They sought insights in relating to women coordinators and to the children and directions in identifying their own long term career goals.

As consequence of this and other sessions, it was decided that a reflective curriculum be developed, to be implemented not only with the men themselves, but with Head Start staff. Its goals would be:

1. Enhanced self esteem for the men through interaction with each other about their own strengths and weaknesses;

2. Greater understanding by the men of their own unique role as nurturers of young children;

3. Men's heightened self awareness as a guide in determining their own long term life objectives;

4. Increased understanding by other caregivers of the unique issues facing men as nurturers of young children.

Attached are only four of many possible strategies for achieving these objectives:

1. Johari Window Exercise (Appendix B), an exercise in self-disclosure and feedback exposing "blind areas" of the self. It is designed to work in groups where a level of trust is already in place, so it would have to be used with discretion, by someone with training. This exercise could be preceded by a discussion of the issues surrounding men as caregivers, then implemented (a) by the men themselves; or, possibly, (b) by men and other Head Start staff.

2. "What Lights the Red Lights?"(Appendix C), an exercise exploring the influences of early childhood experiences on later decisions. This exercise is designed to elicit, in a "safe" environment, men's own experiences of nurturing by their parents or others, to share that experience with peers, then to use what is learned in their interactions with the Head Start children in their classrooms. An additional goal is to identify the available choices in any given situation, and for the men to see for themselves the career and life options they have before them now, that they may begin to open for the children in their classrooms.

3. The "Me" concept map, (Appendix D), an exercise based on the Personal Intelligences identified by Howard Gardner in Frames of Mind. This is a nonthreatening "getting-to-know you" door opener that can work with almost any group. Its goals are to enhance reflective listening, categorizing, and conceptualizing skills in relationship to another person.

4. The "Male Involvement Profile" (Appendix E), designed to be utilized by Head Start staff in evaluating their own response to males as active program participants. It asks, "What do you do?" and "How do you do it?" to questions involving males as volunteers, as attendees at potlucks or other special events, as transporters of their children, as visitors to the Head Start classroom, as parent advisors to the program, as participants in home visit conversations, as educators of the Head Start children, as possible Head Start employees. It is designed to elicit not only specific information about what is being done to encourage male participation, but the subtle attitudes and prejudices that can derail genuine commitment to men as professionals in the field of early childhood education. This Profile could be implemented at a Head Start in-service day, or as a component of a seminar at an early childhood education conference.

In general: getting the men together informally, at sporting events, activities where food is served, or in a regular place that is relaxed and away from their usual routine and probably all-male, will break barriers over time and create the kind of supportive climate that can build trust and mutual respect.

A possible guide in evaluating portions of the curriculum might be, " Some General Questions to Use as a Guide in Gauging Adult-Child Interaction" (Appendix F.).

The dialogue exchanged by the men at the CAEYC Conference (Attachment G) provides some insights into the men's concerns.

V. A success-building-in-the-classroom curriculum be developed.

To establish success in the early childhood classroom for the National-Louis student, the hired coordinator would oversee and formulate the union of National-Louis University instructors and the Head Start supervisor in order to ensure a cohesion of the program goals. The needs of the National-Louis students in the early childhood classroom would be of focus. Meetings periodically arranged would focus on elimination gaps between National-Louis classroom activities and activities performed in the early-childhood classroom based on learning.

Specifically, these meetings would provide the following:

1. Practical strategies for managing groups of small children.
2. NAEYC's "Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education".
3. Goal setting in classroom planning with a focus on children's developmental needs.
4. Plan, execute, review process in lesson planning.
5. Develop team meetings process with Head Start supervising teacher, supervisor of program, students, and lead focus on progress made.

    a. A review format for student that clearly states his role as teacher aide in the program.

    b. A gradual progression throughout the program that entails increased responsibility.

    c. Student involvement in feedback sessions each week with cooperating teacher, specifically in regard to student's experience.

In order to develop the self-esteem of the National-Louis students and the children in their care, a focus on multiethnic\multicultural activities would be of importance. A program designed with self-esteem enhancement would particularly be useful with these men. Because culture is inherent, the National-Louis students will be building on pre-existing inner knowledge of the child, as well as himself, therefore, serving dual purpose:

1.enhancement of the self-esteem of all participants,

2.program goals become more attainable.

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Outcomes.

In general,

1. Coordination among CEDA and NLU staff in careful screening, recruitment, orientation, and curriculum strategies, will result in an incoming group of men with fewer financial and family commitments and a greater likelihood of successful program completion;

2. Community awareness will upgrade the men's image with their peers;

3. Reflective work will address sensitive men-as-caregivers issues;

4. Aggressive outreach and networking within Head Start nationally will eventually lead to better pay for all early childhood educators;

5. Intensive men-children interactive components will enhance the men's own commitment to responsible parenting.

Some unintended outcomes of our group's proposals might be,

1. Increased friction between men and female Head Start coordinators, the sense that there are "too many cooks" fussing around with conflicting agendas;

2. Increased expectations of the men, causing stress;

3. The "Hawthorne Effect" of improvement due only to increased attention placed on the program.

Even in the program's current form, it has some significant achievements. It is unique nationally. Although there are other male involvement programs, none has as a component the certifying of men as Child Development Associates with the promise of full-time employment. Even if the men do not all get their CDA degrees this May, they have all had:

1. An evaluation of their current academic status and credentials;
2. Classroom course work in early childhood development;
3. Some Improvement in basic language and math skills;
4. Support from CEDA center directors on their career directions, in some cases leading to related, better-paying jobs;
5. A chance to support each other in a variety of situations, to "bond;"
6. Exposure to other career options, both within Head Start and in the business community; to academic opportunities to attain those careers through scholarships and networking.

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Some additional developments have occurred as a consequence of increased focus on this program, since the inception of this curriculum project:

1. A more structured recruitment and screening plan, through the Talent Search Program identifying qualified low-income high school graduates with an interest in working with Head Start children;

2. An "incentive plan" for next year's class: to increase pay based on job performance as Teacher's Aides;

3. A more comprehensive screening method with a more complete background check;

4. National-Louis University classes to be taught at the Maywood Head Start site rather than at downtown campus; a written syllabus distributed and discussed with each class.

5. A group of males in early childhood education, in formation for regular meetings through National-Louis University, with about forty men registered, with a focus on common concerns;

6. A budget allocation from the CEDA Head Start funds (rather than private funding) to support the perpetuation and expansion of this program;

7. A new curriculum design team to make adjustments to early childhood education curriculum now in formation through National-Louis University.

Additionally,

1. On Thursday, April 14, 1994, a team of CEDA and NLU staff and three of the men will present a seminar on "The Importance of Male Involvement" at the National Head Start Association convention in Louisville, Kentucky. The presentation will be accompanied by a video of classroom experiences prepared by the site director and the men training at the two sites in Maywood.

2. The Walgreen Company has donated $5,000 to the program to support expanded curriculum materials for classroom use with the children.

3. On Friday, February 25, 1994, Dr. George Smith addressed CEDA Head Start staff on the importance of male involvement in Head Start. In general, the CEDA Head Start staff have begun to understand the importance of involving men at all levels of the program - supervisory and volunteer. All 23 CEDA Head Start sites have committed to hosting a Father's Day.

4. A collaborative National-Louis University-CEDA child care education and training center with a major focus on males, to be located in the northwest suburbs, is in beginning stages of negotiation.

The curriculum project proposals may, through increased funding, recognition of program importance, and avenues for exposure, have opportunities for expanded dialogue and implementation.

ATTACHMENTS:

A. Child Development Associate Assessment System and Competency Standards.
B. Johari Window: An experience in self-disclosure and feedback.
C. "What Lights the Red Lights?"
D. "ME" Concept Mapping.
E. Male Involvement Profile.
F. Parent and Child Interaction Time, Principles/Goals/Questions.
G. men's dialogue, Chicago Association for the Education of Young Children.
H. "Few men choose early childhood education jobs", Suburban Parent.
I. Goodman, Ellen. 1994. Men-as-caregivers collides with fears of being attacked. Chicago Tribune. (3/7/94) 1:13.
J. "The Magic of Male Involvement", National Head Start Association.